

231 | try, and Lugard speaks of 'enormous herds' in 1888¹ which a rinderpest epidemic decimated in 1892.² A few Kukwe keep one or two sheep, but we saw no goats at all in Rungwe district,³ and neither sheep nor goats figure in ritual: cattle and fowls provide flesh for sacrifice. Every woman keeps fowls, as every man seeks to own cattle.

● 262 | With curds and meat from their cattle, with fowls, fish, bananas, grain, pulses, roots and curcubits, as well as bean tops and pumpkin tops, and—less generally—fruit, the Nyakyusa are exceptionally well fed. Since the dry season is so short and two crops of maize and pulses are grown in the year, there are no 'hunger months' such as the Bemba and many other African peoples experience. Shortages and famine occur, but rarely. All [731] the early travellers comment on the quantities of food available in Nyakyusa country.⁴

c. Relations with the outside world

131 | Perhaps the most significant fact in the history of the Nyakyusa is their long isolation, which is mainly the result of their geographical position. Surrounded on three sides by high mountains, and on the fourth by the stormy head waters of the Lake,⁵ the district was largely cut off from the outside world. Slave caravans passed to the north, the west, and the south, but never through Nyakyusa country; and though they were repeatedly attacked by the Sangu, who are said to have raided as far as the Nyasa plain,⁶ and several times by the Ngoni, the Nyakyusa repulsed both peoples. Certain of the Kukwe chiefs were forced for a period to pay tribute to the Sangu chief, Merere; but according to their own account none did so for long, and some never paid at all. Kerr-Cross comments on the contrast before 1890 between the unfortified villages of the Nyakyusa and Ndali, and those of the Lambya and Nyika, who, living in open country and harried

¹ Lugard, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

² H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (1897), p. 430; D. Kerr-Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

³ Featheringham, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 23, mentions goats in Ngonda.

⁴ See especially, Thomson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 268, 274; Lugard, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 131.

⁵ In 1946 a Lake steamer, the *Vijya*, sank in a storm near Karonga with heavy loss of life.

⁶ Kerr Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.

231 find the cleaning of byres in which many cattle are stalled, very
476 arduous. A pagan who has many cattle always has more than one wife.

Thus, herding together was traditionally, and still is, one of the main common activities of neighbours in a village; most cattle are herded with those of neighbours, but there is a measure of co-operation with relatives and personal friends of other villages. It is likely that the practice of placing cattle with friends of other villages is becoming more common.

e. Hunting and fishing

224 From the point of view of village co-operation, hunting and
226 fishing are relatively unimportant, for, in the first place, game and
● 262 fish provide the Nyakyusa with prized foods to eat as relish with
476 the staple bananas, roots, and cereals, rather than with main items of diet; and secondly, hunting and fishing are not primarily village enterprises.

226 Most fishing is done by men, individually, each keeping his own catch; but groups of herd-boys or young men sometimes co-operate to divert a branch of a stream temporarily, so that they may tickle the fish stranded in the shallow pools. They choose a place where a stream divides naturally, and block one channel with stones; but such enterprises are on a small scale. Periodically however, when fish were plentiful, communal fishing was organized during the dry season. The seeds of a certain legume, grown for the purpose, were thrown into the river to stupefy the fish. Men, women, and children waited some way down the stream with hand-nets, and when, an hour or two after the poison had been put in, the fish began to float down stupefied, they were easily netted. The poisoning was organized by the chief and village headmen and all the villages of the chiefdom participated, as well as those from neighbouring chiefdoms, when their chiefs were on good terms. Friends naturally went together, but the various villages did not act as separate units as they do in a communal hunt. Communal fishing never occurred regularly, for if fish were scarce the chief might forbid it for a number of years, and it is now rare, since poisoning the rivers has been forbidden by the Administration. We heard of only one such fishing during our stay in Nyakyusa country.

16. THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH WITCHCRAFT

Mwaisumo (clerk).

1. 'Bestiality. This is associated with witchcraft (*sya bu losi*) 754
because, it is said, witches eat the flesh of human beings which an 839
ordinary person does not eat—ordinary people all avoid human flesh.
One who has intercourse with an animal, a thing which an ordinary
person does not do but avoids, is like one who eats human flesh.'

2. 'Intercourse with a very young girl. This is associated with
witchcraft because no one desires it, only this person' (i.e. such a
desire is abnormal).

3. 'Intercourse with a very old woman. This is associated with
witchcraft because no one desires old women.'

4. 'Intercourse between a grown man and a boy. This is associated 754
with witchcraft because grown men always desire women.' 838

In reply to a question: 'No, it never happens that two grown men
lie together, but youths do. That is not associated with witchcraft; that
is adolescence.'

5. 'If a woman takes something very dirty (such as excrement) and 754
puts it on her husband's bed, or in his food, because she hates him,
that is associated with witchcraft because it is very, very dirty. No one
(normal) does such a thing.'

In reply to a question: 'No, if children play with excrement, that is
not associated with witchcraft.'

6. 'In Selya we do not eat the meat of a leopard though in Kukwe 754
country they do. If a Selya man tastes it people say: "How can he eat 262
leopard meat which no one eats? It's like witchcraft." Leopard meat
is forbidden because leopards kill and eat people.

'So with the meat of a dog or rat or monkey. A dog is not eaten
because it's our friend—a person—and a monkey is a person.'

765 *iselya*); and it is wrapped in a leaf (of the same species as the
 768 flower) which represents a blanket. The symbolism is interpreted
 796 in terms of the habit of growth. A trunk of plantain or sweet banana
 flowers and fruits only once, then dies and is pruned away, being
 replaced by a sucker from the same root, hence the association
 between the flower and the corpse. *Ilitoki* is a large variety of
 plantain, eaten when it is green and hard; *injali* is a smallish
 banana eaten when it is ripe and sweet, and it takes nine months
 to develop. 'When an *injali* stem forms and a woman conceives a
 child at the same time, the bananas will be ripe and the woman
 bear her child together.' No one hesitated about this identification
 of plantain with male, sweet banana with female; it is as obvious
 in Nyakyusa as the associations of 'breeches' and 'petticoats' in
 English.

765 The officiant sprinkles a powdered medicine on to the earth of
 the grave and all the participants (that is, the heirs, widows,
 children, and certain siblings of the deceased) rub themselves in it.
 They rub forehead, right elbow, right knee, and right toe in the
 pile of earth. Only chiefs and their close relatives and twins re-
 frain, for they have been drinking medicines, and such close con-
 tact with a corpse would 'spoil their medicine': 'The medicine
 would go rotten if they touched the grave which contains medi-
 cine,' so the chief's forehead, etc., must not touch the grave. He
 merely touches the earth with a finger-tip.

783 Having touched the earth, all the participants go to wash in a
 stream, and when they return they wash again ritually in the
 765 doorway of the mourning hut, the doctor pouring out medicated
 water from a small calabash and each participant catching the
 water in his hands and rubbing them and his mouth and knees
 with it. Then they oil themselves. Until this ritual they must
 remain dirty and dishevelled with the mud and ash of mourning
 on them, and any who steal away to wash are fined by the other
 relatives.

765 Next the officiant takes roasted bananas and sticks into each one
 or more pumpkin-pips (*inyungu*) and one or more lentils (*inandala*).¹
 She half-buries these in the earth at the doorway of the hut, or sits
 in the doorway holding a banana near the ground, and each par-
 ticipant approaches in turn and stoops and bites off the banana,
 and eats it.

The *ulufumbo* (the litter of dry banana leaves on which the

¹ Some also add cowpeas (*imbange*), others oil-seeds (*inyemba*).

THE RITUAL OF ABNORMAL BIRTH

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birth but they commonly say: 'This illness has come from Kyala, in the ritual we drive away Kyala (*tukunkaga Kyala*).'⁸⁴⁵

MWANDISI (asked about the meaning of the phrase 'War has come' in relation to twin birth): It means the war of Kyala, of the twins, the illness. We bring out Kyala. Let him get out of the body, Kyala has caught hold of him, has brooded over him, has given him twins. 'Go out therefore! (*Soka panya lelo*).' At first he was taboo. Kyala was in the house; he could not come out. So then we bring him out, saying: 'We have fought the war there, he has come out.'

NJOBAKOSA (another elderly man—also said that the ritual was to to 'drive off Kyala'): He [the father of twins] comes out, he takes a spear and shield and runs, and we run. One snatches up a shield, and another, and another. Then we give each other beer to drink, and food, and meat, snatching it from one another; we drive off Kyala. When the father of twins comes out of the hut we say: 'You hit us!' He replies: 'I am innocent (*muvelu*, lit. white) because he has been black (*ntitu*) on account of having twins.'

MWANDISI: If the ritual is not completed [i.e. if copulation does not take place], then they go to divine. It is said: 'The shades are angry.' Are the shades not with Kyala?

ANGOMBWIKI: I remember when I was a child, when I had one younger brother who was just beginning to walk, my father had twins. I remember the people sitting round the beer praying that his first ritual copulation should be successful. They began with Mbasi. 'You, Mbasi,¹ support us! (*Gwe Mbasi utwemele*). You, Kyala, support us!' Then they came to the shades. And I have heard that they always said both Mbasi and Kyala but began with Mbasi.

The parents of twins have been singled out by Kyala or Mbasi and therefore remain somewhat fearful all their lives. Angombwiki said:

The parent of twins (*umwipasya*) seems like a great person (*alete mundu fiyo*), he is not like us, his relatives. See, he has gained two people, he is the child of Mbasi, he is with Kyala, he has seen Kyala. You know that pagans do not eat twin bananas, they fear, saying: 'These are twins (*mapasa*).'²⁶² They give them to small children. (What I speak of is Nyakyusa custom, not the custom of the baptized.) And the parents of twins (*abipasya*) do not eat the bananas on the sides of the bunch, only those in the middle. When a girl has brought a bunch of bananas to them in the temporary hut . . . they say to her: 'Take away those at the sides,' and she takes away here one, and there one.

¹ There were hints of some special connection between the hero Mbasi and twins (*amapasa*), the elder of whom is Mbasi. The younger twin is *Musindaka*, the following child is *Syula*, the next *Kumba*, and the next *Kumbulilu*. [551]

Farewell to Mwampiki

2/4/37

764 Women began to wail about 9 a.m. I saw some arrive with bananas.
184 They stopped wailing after ten minutes or so. Imilanwa (Mwaisalwa) was present. Mwajumba had not yet come. I met Kakuju on the way. He had not yet been told of the ritual. Mbapa and Maleja (widows of Mwalingo) did most of the work, with Ijumba, widow of Mwampiki. Isalwa sat near and watched while Maleja ground up the ointment. Seeds for making ointment were put on the fire. This was the ointment for anointing oneself in the ritual. Beans were brought in a flat basket. 'We mourn', they said, 'with bean mash and the meat of a cow.'

[262] There was some discussion about killing the cow and a dispute between Imilanwa and Simeni. Just as the cow was about to be killed a woman came and made them bring it to the side of the swept court away from the graves. 'If you kill it near the father-in-law's grave the wives will fear to eat the meat.' The cow was killed by Imilanwa. He then called the men of the family to discuss whether or not they should kill a bull also. One had been sent by the Chief Mwaipopo who is 'our son-in-law. He married a daughter of Maleja'. Imilanwa said: 'Let us kill it,' and they agreed. Only thirteen men were present so far.

[171] The meat from the fork of the right foreleg (*ija mmapa*) was taken to
[177] eat with the mash. This is a Sangu not a Nyakyusa custom. The men of the family follow the Sangu custom. The women, daughters of Sangu, do likewise, and the women who are wives of Sangu, but the children of daughters who are married to Nyakyusa men from Selya do the Selya custom. If the daughter of a Sangu marries a Selya man then, if her father dies, she does the Sangu ritual at his place, but if her husband dies she does the Selya ritual at his place even if she has borne him no children, and even if she is herself a child or an infant who has not yet been to him. But her children always do the Selya ritual both at their father's home and at their mother's.

The burying of the banana flower and rubbing in earth is a Selya custom and is only done by the children of Selya men. I saw five or six children do it. Then more children came to rub in earth. One was under instruction at the mission. The women told him to rub himself but Mwajumba broke in: 'If he is a Christian he ought not to perform the ritual.' 'He's under instruction.' 'Very well, he does not perform the ritual, for a Christian should not have two gods (*ba Kyala babili*).' The bull was killed a little way off among the bananas. Mwajumba explained: 'It is just for meat, it's not for the ritual, the further off one. Christians will eat it.'

Shaving of the sprouting hair

Record of Mwaikambo, 22/4/37

First the men and women began drinking beer separately. Then they began the ritual. They went to the grave with beer in a small calabash.

Eating & Drinking.

A few Christian families are beginning to eat *en famille*, but the practice is not looked upon with favour. The open air meal in good weather of course gives way to the meal in the house when it rains. 125
[77]
264

The far-stretching banana groves in which the villages are hidden indicate one of the favourite foods of the people. There are many kinds of banana, from the tiny "Lady's Fingers" to the great plantains, half an arm long; and they are eaten in almost as many ways. Some are eaten direct from hand to mouth, peeled and corded, for even the small cords which adhere to the fruit after the skin is removed, are meticulously attended to; other kinds are cut up and cooked; some are ground into flour, of which porridge is made, or it is added to the flesh pot to give flavour to the soup. 262 •
252

Maize is cooked in many ways: whole, mashed, or ground; boiled or roasted; mixed with other foods, or alone. The porridge made from maize flour is a greyish sticky-looking mess, wholly repulsive to a white man, and is often eaten without relish of any kind. Cassava, with the poison washed out by three days' soaking in running water, then dried and ground into flour; beans, with the skins removed by parboiling, and pressed between finger and thumb; peas cooked without preparation; potatoes, often eaten with milk; these are main food-stuffs, but very many small herbs are used, especially for seasoning, and some very pleasant dishes are often served up to feed sick and well alike.

251 Fish provide many a dainty dish. The bulk of the
262 fish caught is half roasted over a slow fire for preservation; and in that condition it will keep for many weeks. A great dainty is the *unsusu* fish, which is roasted and ground to flour, and hung up in grass bags in the roof, to be used as required.

262 But the Konde is happiest of all when he has flesh
252 to eat; perhaps because it is a rather uncommon event. His cattle are not primarily for killing; primarily they are wealth stored up and increasing year by year. But he kills when there is a birth or a marriage or a death; for all these are occasions when one must not think of expense; and a number of Christians now hold birthday feasts for their children in addition to the occasions I have named. Generally the meat is preferred "high"; and it is then cooked with banana flour, salt, animal fat, pepper, the latter an Arab introduction. A kind of pie is sometimes made, by cutting the meat into slices, and putting it in layers in a pot, the layers being separated by *mbwiga* leaves, a plant which has a curry-like flavour; and the bottom of the pot is covered with maize to prevent the pie being burned.

251 The Nyakyusa practise a method of preserving flesh which I have not heard of as in use elsewhere, though it may really be quite common. Besides the universal method of roasting the freshly killed meat over a slow fire, there is the running water method. The fresh meat is placed in a sandy patch of running water, and left for about three months; but it may be visited

Eating & Drinking

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daily for supplies, provided it is again quickly covered up with both sand and flowing water. All this must be done at night lest the hiding-place be revealed to others, and the flesh stolen. 251

Bread is made of twice-ground maize with salt added. It is kneaded into loaves of about three inches thick, and placed in layers, interleaved with banana leaf, in a pot with maize in the bottom. This bread is often taken on a journey, and will keep for five or six days. Eggs are "scrambled," with milk and salt, in a broken pot, but this is a European introduction. No young girl will eat hard-boiled eggs; they produce a snake in the abdomen, which, of course, in turn produces barrenness. [177] [842] 252

Very unpleasant to our minds are some of the delicious foods the Konde rejoice in: flying ants eaten alive as they are picked up where they fall from their brief honeymoon in the air; crawling white ants, a horrible mass of moving life; the Kungu fly, found on Lake Nyasa, whence it comes ashore in dense clouds, settles on bush and tree, and is shaken off into small baskets, to be taken home and baked into cakes while it is still fresh. In Bundali it is said that some still eat lion's flesh, and once upon a time the crocodile was eaten at Karonga. Sorcerers are accused of devouring human flesh. A new grave is sprinkled with a powerful medicine which makes the corpse come up without disturbing the soil, and the ghoulish feast is enjoyed without leaving a trace of the deed behind. [754] [266] 262●

128 Eating & Drinking

●262 To-day there are many, even among the heathen, who say grace before food ; only the older men now follow the ancient custom of laying aside a small portion of every meal for the spirits. But there are many superstitions nevertheless among young and old. There is a family at Itete which eats neither flesh nor fish, nor ground nuts, any of which cause violent vomiting. Others will eat fish but not flesh, and *vice versa*. Eland and bushbuck bring on leprosy in some families ; goat brings ringworm ; rhinoceros gives people a white skin ; and hippo is very dangerous in the neighbourhood of lepers ; for lepers are buried in ant-hills, but they soon remove and betake themselves to the water, and enter the body of a hippo ; so, if you eat hippo, you may be eating leper ! Nyakyusa women will not eat a fowl, for fowls in the night cry out the names of ancestors ! But a cock which gives a faint cry in the early morning is quite safe. There are many who have abandoned all these beliefs, but the vast majority of the people still cling to them.

273 .*Drinking*.—Beer is drink for men and gods ; or if not for gods, it is a drink urgently demanded by the spirits. With few exceptions, it is offered at all religious ceremonies, but there is no special way of making the beer for the offering ; it differs from ordinary beer only in that the cereal (*malesi*) from which it is made is contributed by all the people, while that used at an ordinary feast is made from *malesi* provided by the entertainer. Even at these feasts, however, a little is spilled on the ground

Omens & Portents

241

787 breasts, sit on a tree near the house; if *mwanjala*,
[825] little black and white birds of another species, hop
about twittering; the approach of strangers is fore-
[574] told. Hospitality to strangers is a primary virtue
among the Konde, and food is prepared at once; but
[576] it is not cooked until they actually arrive. To offer
them food already cooked, is to offer a cold welcome,
and possibly to do an injury; for cold food must not
be eaten by chiefs, nor by hunters, nor by doctors, for
in all these cases the effect would be to destroy the
power of the medicines by virtue of which they are
assured of success in their various callings.

787 5. Omens having reference to food are numerous,
and a few examples must suffice. If a fly goes into
● 262 one's mouth, it is a sure sign that the person will
soon be eating flesh, a rare treat for the Konde, who
seldom eat flesh, unless there is an occasion for it: a
birth, a marriage, or a death. But the fly indicates
none of these; the flesh hinted at is a pure gift with
no kind of condition attached. The same good
fortune is suggested if a child eats cinders from the
fire-place. A leopard crying all night in the neigh-
bourhood is giving information that some one has
broken a food prohibition. New season's food has
been eaten before the chief has laid an offering of the
first-fruits of that particular food-stuff at the grave
of his ancestors, and the dwellers in the underworld
are angry at the insult offered them. The chief is
informed of the crying of the leopard, and the
diviner is called in to find the culprit.

787 There is a common grass called *ditika*, which in

128 as they do, in their behaviour and their mutual relationships to a common type. Space forbids such an undertaking here; and it is necessary to emphasize that, although the most significant facts are described in an orderly manner, and although certain reasons for these facts are indicated in their specific character and in their connections with one another, yet these reasons are not fully or systematically worked out, and the result is a description which leaves the facts only half-explained. And, in so far as this society is not here fully analyzed, so it is not yet fully comparable with others. The reader of this paper will detect many points of similarity and of difference between Nyakyusa society and some other with which he is familiar, but the comparison cannot be made to yield any propositions about the nature of human societies in general until the facts of both have been fully explained in terms of their particular social, cultural, and external conditions.

Climate, Cultural Groups, and European Contact.

101 The Nyakyusa live in the Rungwe District of South Tanganyika in
131 the Rift Valley at the head of Lake Nyasa. The valley is dominated and
133 closed at its North end by the recently extinct Rungwe volcano, from
whose foot the land, starting as an upland plateau 5,000 ft. above sea-level,
tumbles southwards for twenty-five miles in a broken cascade of hills, to
level out in a plain fifteen or twenty miles from Lake Nyasa. The Lake
is 1200 ft. above the sea. The East wall of the Rift rises to 10,000 ft. or
more in the peaks of the Livingstone Mountains, but the West wall is two
[132] or three thousand feet lower. The climate is very wet, for about 130" of
rain fall each year, and, at 9° South of the Equator, is also very hot.
[161] The rain and the sun together make the land extremely fertile; the
[731] district is thickly populated (over 100 to the square mile), famine is rare
and the Nyakyusa are far better fed than most of their neighbours. Rice
177 was introduced into the plain by Arabs, coffee by the German Missiona-
241 rians in the hills, and these two crops to-day, under the enthusiastic care
and guidance of the Government Agricultural Department, bring to
many Nyakyusa a small but steadily increasing cash income.

● 262 Their main foods are bananas, maize, beans, sweet potatoes and a
241 variety of greenstuffs, together with meat and curds from their cattle.
Millet is extensively grown and is used both for making beer and for
eating in the form of porridge.

101 The name *Nyakyusa* is nowadays used by themselves as a general
name for all those who have similar speech and customs and who live in
Tanganyika; but formerly it only covered those who live in the South of
the district, in the plain and up in the hills as far North as the administra-

621 others as well. Any boys' village is found to consist primarily of the
561 sons of the members of some older village who originally gave the land
for its building, but as we shall see later sons of other villages live there
too.

621 At the beginning, when a group of boys starts a new age-village, or
342 when boys join one already formed, they do not all have a hut to them-
selves, two or three friends share a hut. But later, as they grow older,
each builds for himself. The younger ones build their huts of reeds,
but the older ones try to get a few bamboos from their fathers or senior
relatives and build more solid houses. Married men build entirely of
bamboo, but often in a boys' village you will find a compromise between
bamboo and reed, both being used in the same house; and the houses of
bachelors, even though they be all of bamboo, are smaller than those of
married men. The technique of good building is not very difficult, and
the older boys instruct and help their juniors, as they join the village, to
improve the skill playfully acquired as herd-boys so as to build more
substantial huts.

245 The chief food of the Nyakyusa is the banana; men plant bananas
262 immediately round their huts, though their fields are mostly at a distance.
And bachelors, while they continue to eat their main meals at their
parents' village, plant bananas round their own huts as well. Bananas
begin to bear very quickly, sometimes within a year of planting, and so,
soon after the establishment of a boys' village, its members have bananas
of their own, which they cook for themselves and eat with their friends at
odd times during the day. But they have as yet no fields.

864 There is no formal initiation of boys at puberty; but, on the other
[881] hand, the custom of leaving home and joining a boys' village is directly
577 connected by the Nyakyusa with their ideas of decency in sexual life.
They think it is perfectly all right to discuss sex openly among friends of
about the same age but altogether wrong to discuss it either in the presence
of, or with, their parents or those of their parents' generation. If a boy
learns about love-making, in any way, from his parents the Nyakyusa
think that he will not respect them properly and that he himself will be a
fool. A boy must learn these things from his immediate seniors and
friends. One man said to me: "If a boy after about ten years old
stays at home to sleep, he is laughed at by his friends and his own parents
send him away. They say: 'If he sleeps at home he will hear what his
parents talk about at night, the night is always full of lewd talk; and he
may even see them undressing. He will grow up a fool, with little
wisdom.' You see at the boys' village" he went on to say, "the older

SACRIFICES AT THE GROVES OF CHIEFS

77

Here is your cow, your food. We pray to Kyala. May theft go away. Give us food and beans and millet, may we eat and be satisfied. . . . It is said that the sweet potatoes are scarce now, help us. You Mwakabule (117), Mwakomo (112). . . . This is your cow Mwaijonga (82). This is your meat. I shall seek another also which we shall give you like this. 769 782

NGULYO: May the locusts go away. It is you who have caused theft because there is hunger.

KISSOGOTA: At night since we eat scraps of food our bellies are disquieted . . . may we be satisfied. People are eating millet porridge;¹ when food is plentiful they say it's horrible. When someone eats millet porridge he dies, it kills a man. We pray to him, this Kyala, because we do not know him, so we say: 'You Mwaijonga (82) drive away the hunger. Give all of us, Mwaipopo's people, food, and hear us all.' [262]

Mwaipopo's young sons (not the older ones) ate the rest of the sacred meat (*vide* plate 8). Other boys who approached were chased away: 'They thought because their friends were getting meat they would too.' Then the remainder of the carcass was divided: two legs went to the chiefs, two to the commoners, the chine to Kasitile, the breast to Mwaipopo (the chief) who gave half to his sons and half to his daughters—his wives may not eat it. The head went to the priests Ngulyo and his fellows—and some entrails were sent to Seba, widow of Mwaijonga (82). There was some discussion about the disposal of the head: 'Let it be put in Ngulyo's house', they said. Mwaipopo commenting later, explained: [262]

We leave the head in the house of a commoner near the sacred grove in order that the shades can come and eat it. So also with the chine. . . . Kasitile leaves it so that his shades may eat it. We throw the meat by a tree which was planted long ago. He whom we have buried looks towards it, he sits facing the tree and the meat is thrown beside it.² He sees the meat we throw. We offer the meat of the upper forelegs (*ijammapa*), this is the sacred meat, the rest we eat ourselves. The blood pours out on to the ground, it goes beneath, which means that the owners, the shades, receive it, because they are beneath. The shades say: 'We are angry because you have not given us cows to treat the grove, we are angry and send this hunger. Treat the grove frequently!' [275]

Kasitile also discussed the ritual with us later and he remarked:

¹ Millet is ordinarily used only for brewing beer. The Nyakyusa regard millet porridge as very distasteful and eat it only during extreme scarcity. [273]

² We omitted to ask why, in this case, a hut had not been built in the grove.

CLEANSING THE COUNTRY

III

Mwandisi made a great deal of the fact that at the 'throwing out of the rubbish' the village headmen ate meat *raw*. 783
796

Formerly . . . we threw away the ashes and charred brands . . . that is to drive away the shades who warm themselves over the hearth in the house; they bring us sickness, let them warm themselves over there in the long grass! Also in the long grass there we killed meat, and the priests ate it *raw*: no one saw them doing that there in the long grass; we went by day with drums, people from all the homesteads, a moving multitude . . . then we came home . . . the priests remained with their wives, they threw away their bark-cloths, they cut off morsels of meat and ate them *raw*. Because the priests are witches it is they who ate *raw* meat before we chiefs came, the priests are witches. . . . The witches and shades gather and bring sickness together, we kill a cow in the grove, we drive them away. No, they do not eat *raw* meat in the grove, they cook it. But at the capital if the chief has killed a cow for men to eat the priests eat meat *raw*. We have seen them. I, Mwandisi, have seen Mwajole and Kalambo the senior village headmen eating *raw* meat at my place and my wives have seen them also. [262] [753] [793]

'Yes', said one of his wives, 'we saw them and we ran away saying: "Well! Fancy doing it *openly*!"' Mwandisi continued:

The senior village headmen are witches, children of those who ate *raw* food long ago. Some village headmen only rush to eat a cow we have killed, but some go to eat a person; those are the witches who eat *raw* meat! [754]

The function of a chief is to feed his men on beef, and in doing so he placates the witches who are commoners and who, like their forefathers, prefer their meat *raw*. If they do not get beef then the witches eat men.¹ [643]

(c) SMALLPOX

The prayer and 'clearing out of the rubbish', traditionally celebrated before an approaching epidemic, was described by an elderly Christian, Fibombe. It illustrates very clearly the combination of practical precaution—isolation—and magical protection, and also the idea that sickness was brought into the country by witches. 783
796
753

When the chief had heard that smallpox was coming, or dysentery, he said, 'Let us pray'. Before my baptism I saw it, in the country of the

¹ cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 92-4.

789 them first, then his grandfather, and father. Others told us that
778 rain stones always came from Kisi country, a very wet strip of
land on the north-east shore of the Lake where the clouds always
seem to gather when one looks south from the Nyakyusa valley
and plain, and a piece of perforated wood used in Ngonde for
making rain came from the hills of Misuku, also a very wet
country. Kasitile's stones were of two types, but no direct associa-
tion of male and female was made. However, the Kukwe spoke
of a 'mother' stone having young. 'The rain-maker puts back the
stone in the potsherd without water (after rain has come) and
going later he finds that it has got young, perhaps seven, with the
mother there are eight.'

791 The rain-makers are subject to certain taboos: during the dry
[784] season they may not wash lest they drive away the rain nor do they
shave for 'they compare hair and clouds saying, "Let it be black",
they compare a bald pate with sunshine.' And the rain-maker
● [262] may not eat roasted maize 'for as the maize crackles in the pot-
sherd when it is roasted, so the thunder will crackle in the sky'.
He may not eat green maize (which is reaped during the rains)
until the dry weather begins 'because he creates rain, which
means he creates all the food which grows with the rain'. If he
begins eating too soon he may stop the growth. And when the
rain-maker is manipulating his instruments a sex taboo is observed.
[834] 'When I am making rain,' said Kasitile, 'I do not sleep with my
wives for two days, it's taboo. How would Kyala help us if I did?'

In theory the rain-maker always works under the direction of
[643] the political authority—the Kyungu or a chief—but he is also
thought to wreak vengeance on those who anger him. Kasitile
was critical of his colleague in the hills above Isumba: 'He never
makes a nice gentle rain, it always destroys food. . . . He is always
demanding things from men, and, if they refuse, he brings his
rain to destroy things. . . . There is a very strong wind and heavy
rain which takes roofs off homes.' But when Kasitile himself was
[464] angry, because his son was taken as a tax defaulter to work on the
[687] roads, the weather grew bad.

789 People say I am angry, that this rain is because they came and beat
me because of tax. This time the tax collectors came to my place and
beat me and when I thought, 'It is not the custom with our forefathers
for the tax collectors to come at all to men like me', I grew angry and
prayed. . . . When I was in MuNgonde the country suffered from
hunger, all their children were in trouble. . . . Then I came up, and

753 and achievement. An account of the treatment of a field for
578 protection against wild pig emphasizes this.

789 If people wish to protect a crop from wild pig they go to a doctor to
241 ask for medicine. When he gives it to them he tells them that there
[689] must be no quarrelling in the home after they have barricaded the
field. Four women go to the field with the husband of the one who
cultivates it. They go after sunset. One woman is shaved; her head is
a symbol of the garden devastated by pig. A second woman, who keeps

[302] her hair, has a head-pad on her head and carries bananas with medi-
cine. She enters the field and eats the bananas. The husband climbs
a hill at a little distance, and two of the women go into the long grass
close to the field. The bald pate twists a head-pad and the one with hair
smears it with medicine and as they do so they look towards their
[831] husband and abuse him saying, 'You lay with your mother', and he
swears at them saying, 'The leather aprons of your fathers' . . . and
many other insults. Then the women walk round the edge of the field,
sprinkling medicines, and they go out the way they came in. The
circular pad is a symbol of the barricade placed round the field. When

• [262] they return home they do not eat but go to sleep hungry (though the
clever ones eat beforehand). If they quarrel, the pig finishes the food.
It is as if quarrelling destroyed the fierceness, the power, of the pro-
tective medicine; you must put aside all quarrelling that the medicine
may be powerful. If the pigs come it is as if there were a quarrel, so the
woman and her husband quarrel in the field mimicking the pig. The
husband on the hill is like the pig approaching the field, his wives in
the long grass also represent pigs. . . . The husband and his wives
quarrel only in the field. If, when the maize is ripe, the husband beats
one of his wives for any cause she does not go to pick the maize herself,
a friend picks it for her. If she goes in her anger she finds the maize
finished, nothing but earth is left.

789 Here the link between medicines and morality is made plain.
689 Quarrelling weakens medicines of all sorts and renders them
ineffective. But a mimic quarrel between husband and wives in
the fields renders the medicine effective. It represents the battle
between the pig and the medicines. There is a suggestion else-
[775] where (pp. 69, 113) that pigs are *sent* by the shades when kinsmen
or neighbours quarrel, but in the account just quoted it is implied
that quarrelling in the home directly injures the medicine.

278 In themselves, many medicines are neutral. They may be
754 put to good or evil ends, but because they are mysterious and
789 powerful, they are feared, in the same sort of way as atomic
energy is feared in contemporary society. Men use medicines
themselves 'for purely peaceful purposes', but they are shocked at

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

175

The negative rituals—the taboos which surround the pro-creative functions—disappear rather slowly, but a Christian father will enter his wife's hut to greet her after she has given birth to a child, and will eat food cooked by her a week or two later, which the pagans think extremely rash. An atmosphere of scepticism and experiment begins to develop; a few Christians spoke of breaking even the deeply-entrenched taboos surrounding menstruation 'to see what happened'. But that many Christians, especially women, feared the old taboos was apparent when one watched the behaviour of Christian daughters-in-law towards their fathers-in-law. In theory Christians disregarded the rules of avoidance if their fathers-in-law are Christian, or avoid 'only a little', but in practice a Christian woman is usually embarrassed and fearful if, by mischance, she meets her father-in-law face to face.¹

Christians withdraw from the pagan communal rituals even more completely than they do from the rituals of kinship. No Christian takes any part in the sacrifices to the heroes, or at the groves of chiefs, or in cleansing the country, or in rain-making, or sprinkling the homesteads. As for the ritual of chieftainship, from that also Christians withdraw. At the time we were first in BuNyakyusa only two chiefs were professing Christians, one of whom was already baptized before his installation. The 'coming out' performed for him was much curtailed since he refused to use the traditional medicines and, because of the difficulty over medicines, Christians were not acceptable as village headmen. In Ngonde, where the proportion of Christians was much greater, there were Christian headmen and chiefs, but the ritual of 'coming out' had disappeared altogether, and the Kyungu had delegated the celebration of all pagan rituals to one of his councillors who still believed in them, he himself being a sceptic.

There are tales of the early missionaries visiting the groves to challenge pagan belief. The pagans believe that they were confounded and some of the more conservative Christians also think that the terror of the grove drove the Reverend — Jauer from Lubaga (*vide supra*, p. 29) and that *because* the Reverend — Kleus summoned the teachers and school children to a feast in the grove of Mbyanga, and killed 'a black cow' for them there, a season of plenty followed. 'Many people said: "He seems to have been advised by someone, why did he go to Mbyanga and sing

¹ For an account of such a meeting, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 84-5.

x 797 by immersion and were strict about not eating the flesh of animals
 x 795 without a cloven hoof, and avoiding beer, but made a point of not
 being sabbatarian and working in their fields on Sundays—
 [852] these were the things they emphasized to us. They were also
 [262] pacifist and would not join the Police or King's African Rifles,
 [688] since Rutherford taught that all Government was evil.
 [668]

(d) 'INDEPENDENT' AFRICAN CHURCHES

There is a great cleavage between the mission Churches and the
 'independent' African Churches, which also claim to be Christian,
 read the Gospels at their services, and recite the Apostles' creed,
 but whose rules of life are avowedly based on the Old Testament
 rather than the New (*vide* p. 191). Both the 'independent'
 [595] Churches operating in BuNyakyusa approve polygyny; the
 bulk of their members are middle-aged polygynists and they have
 at least as many men as women among them. Nyasuru's statement
 on polygyny was interesting:

When we young men went to join the mission we found that many of
 our fathers were attracted by it. They said to us: 'If only the Europeans
 would let us come in with all our wives we would come.' . . . Some-
 times it would happen that the son of an old man's second wife would
 join the mission and become a preacher and he would preach even
 to his father, saying: 'You pagans do wrong, you marry many women,
 you must repent, your ways are evil.' Then his father would say to
 him: 'On the contrary, it is not I who do wrong, if I had married only
 one wife you would never have been born, and you young men take
 one wife only and then what happens? You steal other men's wives,
 [684] continually, in secret, and the country is full of lawsuits about women.
 It is our custom which is good.' . . . And so we, now, we have our
 Church and our fathers come in with us. It is our aim to take the old
 people with us, not ourselves to go forward alone. All the other matters
 which the missionaries brought to us we think are good, only this
 European custom of marriage is difficult.

Nyasuru and Ngemela had both been suspended from the
 [598] Church of Scotland Mission for marrying second wives, and
 [688] Nyasuru, a man of fifty-three, had four wives when we knew him.
 He kindly provided us with a copy of a statement on the beliefs
 and constitution of the African National Church, which is worth
 quoting in full:

121 and try to understand the nature and reasons for change. Here, then, is a good opportunity for the study of social change - not only in land tenure as such, but also in village and family organisation, political authority and economic life.

II

101 The Nyakyusa are a Bantu people inhabiting the main part of the Rungwe District in southern Tanganyika, immediately to the north of Lake Nyasa. In 1948 they numbered about 199,000 in that District, but about 161 10,000 men were probably at the time temporarily absent from their homes and in employment in the mines and towns of the Rhodesias and South Africa (see Gulliver, 1957), whilst about 20,000 had migrated to live in the adjacent Mbeya District to the north.

131 The tribal area comprises a confined geographical basin surrounding the northern end of Lake Nyasa. It extends only about 40 miles from the tip of the lake at 1,550 feet above sea level to the Poroto Mountains in the north at 8,000 feet; and from east to west is only about 30 miles, from the almost sheer walls of the Livingstone Mountains (with peaks up to 10,000 feet) to the Ndali Highlands (rising to about 7,000 feet). There are therefore unusually large ecological differences within so small an area. Three major regions are to be distinguished: the "Northern Highlands" over about 4,500 feet, the low-lying "Lake Plains" in the south, and the "Central Region" in between. [33] Everywhere rainfall is reliable and high, averaging at least 100 inches annually¹, and this amply compensates for a certain poverty and misuse of the soil, although (and particularly in the Central Region) it brings dangers of soil erosion. Except in the highest parts the banana is the staple food, supported by maize, beans, finger millet and groundnuts. In the Northern Highlands coffee has become well established as the principal cash crop: in the Lake Plains paddy rice cultivation provides both a food and a cash crop: in the Central Region the country is too low generally for coffee and too high and dry for rice; consequently cash-cropping is considerably inferior and the people's standard of living is rather poorer.

132 The Nyakyusa and their country tended for a long time to be relatively isolated from the outside world by high mountain walls and rain-soaked roads. In addition, or because of it perhaps, they developed an almost unique culture which was supported by considerable conservatism and high insularity. They still continue to regard their African neighbours beyond the mountains as their social and cultural inferiors. The turmoil of the slave-trade in Central Africa passed them by; in modern times they have not enthusiastically accepted Christianity and they have refused to take up the use of Swahili, the Territorial *lingua franca*. In recent years, and most especially since the end of World War II, they have, however, accepted and pushed forward with vigour a rapid and extensive economic development, involving particularly the production of coffee and paddy as cash crops, and large-scale labour migration to the south in the high-wage mining industries. The multiplicity of petty, often tiny, independent chiefdoms has been reorganised to provide four local government areas, each under a Rural Council, in which the old chiefdoms have become something like parishes². Although much of the old conservatism and narrow parochialism persists, yet there is now an atmosphere of accepted change, of a keen desire for economic development, and a general acceptance of a cash economy.

133 Probably the most significant feature of modern life in the Nyakyusa country is the increasing scarcity of land for agriculture in relation to the

1. At Tabora, in the Northern Highlands, annual rainfall averaged 99.28 inches between 1919 and 1932; at Kere, in the Lake Plains, the average between 1940 and 1951 was 106.25 inches.

2. Sir Kingsley, E.R. The institution of a system of local government by African rural councils in the Rungwe District, Tanganyika; *The Journal of African Administration*, 6, 4, October, 1951.

people's needs. The importance of this can scarcely be overemphasised for a peasant people who are adopting a cash economy and are socially and emotionally deeply attached to their land - their single, continuous source of capital and their tribal heritage. Apart from the possibilities of labour migration which, so far at any rate, are taken up only temporarily and by the younger men, there are no economic opportunities and no capital to compete with the land. In non-economic life the land remains supreme as the persisting basis of society. [K1 423] [167]

As late as 1940 the District Commissioner, Rungwe, was able to write that there was most generally sufficient land for the people's needs in all parts of the country, and the only competition was perhaps in respect of the very best and most fertile tracts, as had always been the case. G. Wilson recorded similar remarks in the late nineteen-thirties. That these observations were correct cannot be doubted. It is known, for instance, that until the post-war years in the Lake Plains - where now land shortage is most acute - there was a broad belt of mainly unoccupied, uncultivated bushland, infested with game, extending from the Livingstone Mountains in the east to the Nyanaland border in the south-west. There were extensive, more or less empty areas in almost every chiefdom. The people were subsistence farmers only, and also banana eaters, and in this well-watered country their agricultural requirements were adequately met on very modest holdings, from most of which two harvests a year could be gathered. [136] [137] [262]

In the brief period of little more than ten years the situation has altered radically to the point of a general shortage of land (except for some parts in the north-west), and especially in the Lake Plains the available land is quite insufficient to meet the demands of the inhabitants. This critical change is the result partly of an increasing population, augmented by some immigration from other tribal areas; but more especially it is the result of the demands for larger arable holdings to meet cash crop aspirations - i.e., money earning. Although both coffee and paddy rice cultivation had begun before 1939, and both were encouraged and developed during the War years, it was not until after 1945 that both of these cash crops became well and generally established and the demand for money incomes became universal. [433]

III

It was in order to investigate this new situation, which was beginning to become serious and to cause concern to Government, that I made a sociological survey in 1955. I had already spent some months in the country in 1954 investigating labour migration in order to provide Government with information and to make recommendations to deal with the problems arising. The second period of work occupied about five months. During both enquiries I was extremely fortunate in having the use of the excellent monographs of G. and M. Wilson who had carried out a conventional anthropological study of the Nyakyusa between 1934 and 1938. Without their basic work behind me, neither of my two studies would have been possible in so brief a time, and I must gratefully acknowledge the real value of their writings. [121]

The intention had been that a complete enquiry should be made into Nyakyusa land conditions in all parts of the country, and that it should culminate in a full recording of tribal land law and custom with a view to its possible reform. In the event only the initial enquiry in the field in the Lake Plains was completed and the results of that alone are described in this essay. Whereas in former days there were probably few distinctive differences between the various parts of the country, in modern times with the introduction of different cash crops, with differential population growth and varying demands on the land, important divergences seem to be arising. For example, [171]

plots of maize, squashes, tobacco, etc., and useful trees (bamboo, citrus-mango, kapok, wrywaxen and firewood). Artificial drainage would, of course, make more land available along the rivers, but this is in general beyond the abilities and resources of the Nyakyusa without considerable outside assistance.

Finally, in this matter it is to be remembered that in addition to a man's arable holding, each of his wives has a banana plot at her house from which she obtains her staple foodstuff. Such plots amount to perhaps about a tenth of an acre on the average. On the other hand, the Nyakyusa are no longer prepared to tolerate a predominantly banana diet. Rice has, in most areas of the Lake Plains, become almost as important as bananas.

Large-sized Holdings

Some blame for this novel shortage of land and the smallness of the average holding has often been laid upon that minority of Nyakyusa who have exceptionally large holdings, and also upon the immigrants from beyond the Lake Plains who have come to settle there during the past decade.

The occupiers of large-sized holdings are rather fewer than has sometimes been supposed. The notoriety of large land-owners, such as some of the modern chiefs with as much as 25-30 acres, has brought more attention to them than is really warranted. Most chiefs and village headmen have arable holdings of above average size, as a result of their privileged positions in the land allocation system and because of their prestige influence; but they remain a small minority and their number is bound to decrease in the future as inheritance causes sub-division of their holdings, for most of them have also more than the average number of wives and sons. In the two high-density regions it is clearly impossible for any man much to increase his present holding. As will be shown later (see page 24) the modern trend is not unnaturally towards a dangerous fragmentation of holdings.

The data obtained in this matter for my eight village samples are summarised in Table III, page 15. In those villages the two men out of 372 who held more than ten acres were a village headman and the father of a chief.¹ There were seven other headmen and one chief as well as some other locally influential men amongst the people covered by my surveys, but none of them held more than ten acres. There are, of course, some commoners amongst the large land-holders; many of them are close relatives of the chief or headman and have thus received preferential treatment. Some, however, are ordinary villagers who were perspicacious enough to see future trends and to obtain land in the early days before most men realised its new value and when vacant areas were still easily available. Such men are tending to become a new, wealthy class, but on the other hand they are particularly susceptible to the begging of kinsmen and friends who have insufficient land. If they are not to be regarded as unneighbourly or even anti-social (perhaps practising witchcraft) they are virtually compelled to be generous sometimes, both with their land and with their profits.

On the whole this minority of men excites little attention or jealousy among the Nyakyusa, who indeed take it for granted that their chiefs and headmen will have more land than ordinary villagers, as befits their status and prestige. If it be thought that by reducing somehow the size and number of these unusually large holdings then the land shortage might be partly relieved, it is a false hope. I scarcely think that the Nyakyusa would welcome any such attempt at interference by administrative action, but in any case it would only provide minor and temporary relief here and there and would not be worth the executive difficulties involved.

1. This second man should be a chief himself but he was dismissed by Government on his imprisonment for poaching. He still holds much of the prestige and privilege of a chief for his son is only allowed equality in purely local government affairs.

[P.237A]

Nyakyusa

- 137 in thickness. This part is devoid of timber except along some river banks—*Albizia* and *Acacia* spp.—and fuel has to be carried some distance. The dominant herbs are *Crotalaria striata* and *Hyparrhenia* sp., with *Phragmites* and *Pennisetum purpureum* along the rivers.

Methods of Cultivation

- 241 The work of cultivation is equally divided between the sexes. After the plots have been cleared and hand-hoed by the men, it is women's work to plant, clear, harvest, winnow and sell at the market. Men's work consists of clearing, hoeing and looking after the cattle.

- 242 Rotation of crops is practised, as it must be in an area where all land is far from productive. In the highlands, 9,500 feet to 5,000 feet, the rotation in valleys is sweet potatoes, finger millet, groundnuts, finger millet, groundnuts, finger millet and rest for five years, or sweet potatoes, maize for five years and rest for five years. On the hillsides, finger millet and pigeon pea or finger millet alone are sown every fourth year.

In the medium altitudes, between 5,000 feet and 2,3,000 feet, the rotation is finger millet, maize and yams, beans, rested and grazed. Continual planting of rice cannot take place as fertility is so quickly impaired.

In the lower altitudes, below 2,000 feet, rice is planted continuously for some 15 years and the land is then rested and grazed for about 8 years.

Diet and Food Crops

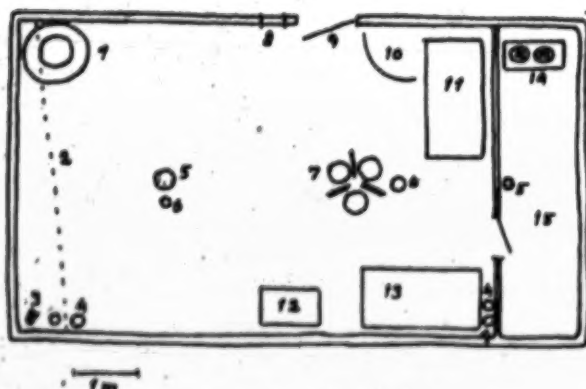
- 262 No one food is the staple throughout the district, but plantains, maize and sweet potatoes for the higher altitudes and rice on the lake shore are generally eaten, with additions that vary from area to area.

- 243 Maize is planted both on contoured ridges and on flat land. Holes are drilled generally 3 feet apart and each hole has 3 seeds planted in it. Maize is usually interplanted with beans or Bambarra groundnuts, groundnuts, cowpeas or pigeon peas. Planting takes place in the highlands in July to September and harvesting in February to April. In the medium altitudes, two crops are planted annually, in November to February and again in May to June. In the lower altitudes, however, little maize is grown

- [251] and this is sown in November to December and harvested in March and April. Maize is stored in mud-covered basket granaries or is [262] sold as soon as it is dried. It is eaten roasted or boiled with beans. The varieties of maize grown vary but they are mostly of the hard flint type.

- 245 Bananas and plantains are grown all over the district except in the highlands to the north and west. Numerous local varieties abound, with a red plantain and the *Sukari* variety of banana as recent introductions, and are used exclusively for food, no beer being made. They are mostly dried and pounded with pestle and mortar to be used as flour, although they are also eaten whole after roasting.
- [262
273
[251] Sweet potatoes are extensively grown. They are planted on contoured ridges from 3-4 feet high. Planting distances vary from 6 inches to 1 foot in either direction. They are planted in March to May and north of Tukuyu take eight months to mature, but south of that place four months is sufficient. Sweet potatoes are eaten boiled or roasted.
- 243 Finger millet is used more for beer-making than for food. It is always sown broadcast in November to January and harvested in March to May. The land is first hand-hoed and all grass put into heaps and burnt when dry. In the highlands to the west the trees are lopped and branches piled in heaps to be burnt. Contoured ridges are put in at intervals depending on the slope of the land. The harvesting is carried out just before the grain is ripe by cutting off the heads and stacking in the field while ripening proceeds. The heads are then collected into large baskets and steeped in water for a day, after which they are taken out and rubbed with the hands to separate the grain from the chaff. The millet is then dried and stored in earthenware pots or mud-covered baskets until required. It is reported that it can be stored for five or six years by this method, but I have not verified this personally.
- [251] 244 Beans are nearly always interplanted with maize or sown in banana plantations and the local seed is of mixed varieties. They are eaten boiled as a relish with other food such as maize. The leaves are also eaten dried or fresh.
- 245 Groundnuts are grown in the medium and lower altitudes. Planted in November to February and harvested in April to July, they are dried in the shell and eaten raw.
- 243 Rice is grown on the lake shore and also in the neighbouring foothills. It is sown broadcast in November to February and harvested in May to August. Yields are not high in the foothills, being about 6-7 bags of paddy to the acre. Many local varieties are grown, such as Musafiri, Mwangulu, and Marula. The hill rice is eaten boiled, but most is sold hand-hulled in the markets for purely local consumption.
- [252
438]

342
[352
353]



Idina's house: 1, basket; 2, clothes-line; 3, broom; 4, jars, in the back room on low shelf; 5, posts supporting roof; 6, small dimension bamboo poles, supports for the ceiling; 7, hearth with three round hearthstones; 8, shuttered opening through which the bolt may be reached; 9, door; 10, camava for food; 11, spare bed; 12, table; 13, Idina's bed; 14, shelf for jars; 15, store-room behind mud wall with door.

[361] man and his two wives. The houses were grouped round a common courtyard, the doors giving upon this space and not on the nearby village thoroughfare.

The three houses bore the names of Iseliha's house, Idina's house, and Baba's house. The elder wife, Iseliha, had several minor children, who slept either near her own bed or in the living area. She owned furnishings as modern as a chair and a cupboard with shelves, besides the usual objects in these houses, baskets, bamboo mugs, hen's nest and roost, ladder and water jars. She also had an earthenware beer jar which, one day when I called on her, was standing on the fire, nearly making the froth boil over. She was preparing beer for her husband's friends, who had just dropped in.

The new wife, Idina, had a store-room in her house, and there was also a large heap of camava, meant for food. As often seen in these houses, she had also a guest bed. She had a number of jars and baskets, but no hen's nest. Straight across the room she had suspended a line on which she put her clothes. Such an arrangement was often used, especially by the bachelors; they had a line for their shirts. Clothes-hangers were not in use. You just threw your clothes across the line. A wardrobe was never seen.

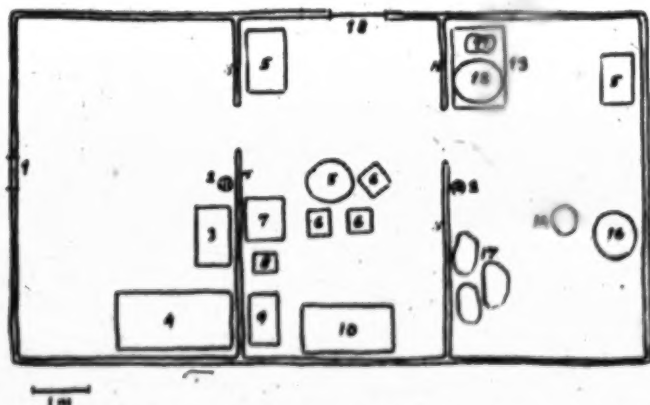
The interior of Baba's house presented a peculiar picture. It was divided into three rooms, a living-area in the middle; at one side the bed-room, at the other a store-room. The bed-room had only one bed and a wooden chest. There was no hearth in the living-room—for the husband had his meals prepared by one of his wives. But there was a true accumulation of tables, chairs, suitcases, and a

12: Bisgaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

BISGAARD

Home-Types of the Banyakyusa

61



Baba's house: 1, barrel window; 2, posts supporting roof; 3, wooden chest; 4, Baba's bed; 5, table; 6, chair; 7, cupboard; 8, chair with three suitcases; 9, suitcase; 10, table with bookshelf; 11, bag; 12, large basket, dikoko; 13, low stand for 11 and 12; 14, millet jars; 15, low partitions; 16, dinks in which the millet is washed; 17, rice in bags.

cupboard. This seemed very strange and a bit disorderly. On a chair were three suitcases on top of each other.

It was interesting to see, in the store-room, the very crops that belong to the man, viz. rice and millet, the most valuable produce. The rice was in bags, and it is quite probable that this man had bought it from the districts near Lake Nyasa, where it thrives well. On higher ground, rice cannot be cultivated.

The millet was contained in a basket, 1 m in height, 55 cm broad at the bottom, and narrower, 35 cm, at the top.

Further, there was a large, beautiful earthenware jar, which he had bought. This was intended for the millet. And there was also a cylindrical container for the washing of the millet when it was brought home from the field. This vessel was 55 cm in height and 85 cm across.

All three houses had a small window with bars or shutters.

The inside of the houses lay in semi-darkness, as the only light is admitted through the doorway, and in some cases through the diminutive barred window. Nevertheless, the interiors give a nice impression, because of their tidiness, height, size, and cleanness. And how cosy they are, when seen at night; the door is closed, you gather round the fire and delight in perfectly cooked rice, which is the favourite dish at this principal meal of the day.

Johnson says (1897, page 453) that the greater number of the houses are circular in their plan and very much like bee-hives in shape; their walls are wickerwork filled with mud ribs, and they have thatched roofs. He also reports

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very substantial, the main meal being taken in the evening shortly before sunset.

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8. Manufacture. The pot for cooking (*indeku*) is placed on three stones which form the hearth (*ikipembero*, hearth stones). The flat bowl made of clay used for the needs of the kitchen is called *utwagabia* and a pig pot used for storing water *ingumbe*. The pots of clay

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are manufactured by Kissi women because in their land on the north-eastern shores of Lake Nyassa the best clay is found. In the eastern part of the Nyakyusa country adjacent to Kissi land the women visit the pottery markets of the Kissi, but to the remoter villages, e. g. around the Rungwe volcano the pottery is brought by Kissi men. In this case, owing to the great distance from the Kissi-Land the men carry the loads of eight to ten pots on their head between split poles of bamboo. The Kissi pots I saw in the Rungwe Station were ornamented in a rough way with red ochre and seemed only slightly baked. The hearth stones, however, are made by the Nyakyusa women themselves as I was able to observe near Rutenganio, where widows manufactured them for sale.

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In many villages of the Nyakyusa I could watch basket-making. This I saw being done by men. In the chief's hut in Katumba I had the opportunity to admire a great number of very big baskets (*istuba*) for storing grain, smeared with cow dung on the outside. The attractive closely wickered baskets, which are filled with *malesi* (millet) and then placed in water for a night in the process of beer-brewing were originally made by the Buanyi, but nowadays also the Nyakyusa are said to be skilled enough to weave them. I had no opportunity to observe it, but could acquire an excellent specimen of that wicker-work.

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9. The Meal. At the beginning of each meal the hands are washed, including those of children. The men take their meal separately from the women. The wives only eat when their husbands have been satisfied. Boys under ten years eat with their mothers, but as soon as they begin to live in age-set villages, they eat together with their friends of their own age-set, as described in detail by Mr. G. Wilson in his "Introduction of Nyakyusa Society" (*Bantu Studies* X, p. 271). The head of the family likes to eat together with his friends.

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Meat is eaten very seldom, but on special occasions such as marriages, death lamentations, christenings of Christianized natives, enormous quantities are devoured. *Ingema* (Swahili: *nyema*) is the Nyakyusa word for all sorts of meat, *ingombe* for that of cattle and *ingembaku* for that of oxen. Near Utungula I saw black pigs (*ingurwa*, pig)

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grubbing for food outside the stable. Old people also eat the meat of apes (*salila*, ape) and of jakal (*ingebe*). The Nyakyusa men are generally very fond of eating fowl, indeed: "Wakugana inyama sya inguku", they are fond of the flesh of fowl. 262 [192]

Bones are usually given to the children for gnawing. Eight to ten boys may be seen sitting in a circle and alternately gnaw on the same bone, often drinking a little milk (*ulukama*) the while.

During a boating on Lake Nyasa I saw the well-known columnar clouds formed by the so-called Kungu-flies in the distance above the surface of the water. These flies are also eaten by the peoples on the shore of the Lake. When these insects come shore-wards they are caught, roasted at home and then eaten. But I was told that sometimes they are also caught and eaten out on the Lake, being squeezed into lumps between the hands. [136] [252]

The Nyakyusa eat with the right hand, but when the meal consists of such food as boiled maize and beans (*ingate*) they also use spoons (*uluiko*) made of folded strips of banana leaves. Nowadays, however, tin spoons and tin plates have come into wide use. The ancient eating mats (*akatefu*, diminutive of *urutefu*) are also being more and more displaced. 264 [412] [178] 285

When the meal is over, the vessels and plates are cleaned with the fingers, bent inward, and then licked off. The mouth is rinsed out with water.

10. Diet. The vegetable diet is roughly the following. The light meal in the morning consists mostly of boiled maize-cobs (*ingate*), sweet potatoes (*imbatata*), bananas (*ilitoki*, pl. *amatoki*), roasted bananas; or, *amaufu*, sweet bananas. The main meal in the evening, shortly before sunset, usually consists of flour porridge (*ikiyindi*), beans (*indima*), both often boiled together with maize, peas (*efinyaga*) very often in the form of porridge, maize-corns (*ikirombe*) and groundnuts (*isya-bala*, pl. *amasyabala*). These groundnuts are dried in the sun on mats. Bananas, if dried in the same manner, are usually halved lengthwise and spread out sometimes on banana leaves. I have seen this done in the village of Katunba. Granary stores are very often, e. g. near Utengule (on the border of Nyakyusa and Safwa culture), erected on platforms supported by poles. The container is a big quadrangular basket, roughly three by three meters in length and 1 m in height. The roof has the shape of a large Chinese hat and can be taken off from the lower part of the granary. 262 264 [251] [285] 415

262 The tender leaves of pumpkins and taro plants (*amasimbi*, leaves of taro), as well as of a number of other plants growing wild (*indeke*) are also used as vegetables. This food is called *iseke*, a word denoting all sorts of green vegetables.

[278] In his treatise on "The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa" (The Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 1; 1938, p. 43). G. Wilson points out that the fruit of the so — called *unsyunguti* — tree is "both delicious to eat and also full of seeds which are dried and crushed for ointment (*inyemba*)", but he adds that he had been unable to find out the botanical name of this useful tree. Perhaps the following passage in the article of Dr. Kerr Cross ("Notes on the Country Lying between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika"; Proc. Roy. Geogr. Inst. N.S. Vol. XIII, 1891, p. 98) may be helpful in this connection: "There is a tree of the sycamore family which grows extensively all over the north of the lake called *mwisyungute* by the natives which might be developed. [262] It is a most picturesque tree which produces a food, an oil, and a dye. [386] The oil or fat, when cool, is solid, even at a tolerably high temperature, and is like beeswax. It burns well as a night-light, and with wax might be made into candles. In a rude way I have made candles of it. It might [388] also make an excellent soap."

273 As an adjunct to these foods curdy milk (*ulukama ulukafu*) is very [372] much esteemed¹, to say nothing of the various types of beer, mostly prepared from millet for the men. Large fields of millet are, therefore, to be seen everywhere in the land of the Nyakyusa. On one occasion I attended a beer drink in the hut of a chief. The conduct of the natives present, the chief and his advisers (*amafumu*), was in every respect praise-worthy. Pleasant and interesting stories were narrated. [574] Infrequently the invitation of a commoner who has had some differences with his chief or one of the *amafumu* to such a feast is regarded as a gesture of reconciliation.

243 As in the time of Sir H. H. Johnston so also to-day "all the oozymeadows are planted with rice." A traveller coming from the hilly region to the north on nearing Lake Nyasa is struck by numerous large fields of rice in the plain at the northern end of the lake.

178 11. Crafts. Mackenzie (1925) is certainly justified in complaints of the decay of the arts and crafts among the Nyakyusa. The Indian and European influence is to be seen everywhere in the deterioration and final dissolution of these branches of the ancient culture of the Nyaky-

¹ A. Wilson, Introduction, p. 256.